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ABSTRACT

A mail survey was conducted to gather information about entry-level career opportunities for college graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations in the United States. One hundred questionnaires were mailed to nonprofit and voluntary organizations, with a return of 57 usable questionnaires. The findings of the study show that there are employment opportunities for graduates in these organizations. The employment opportunities include specific positions ranging from program directors and supervisors to social workers and from teachers to counselors. The positions existing in these organizations permit the entry of graduates from a variety of academic disciplines. The study suggests that for continued growth and development of the nonprofit sector and its contribution to the nation's employment, trained personnel with college degrees are needed. For this purpose, colleges and the nonprofit sector could develop cooperative programs, internships, and volunteer opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers with these organizations upon completion of their degree. Courses in administration and management of the nonprofit sector, fundraising, communications, public relations, and partnership development could be jointly prepared and offered by universities and the nonprofit sector. Finally, a national agenda should be set up to develop talents, skills, knowledge, and personalities among graduates for improved management of resources in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. (Author/KC)

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ENTRY LEVEL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES IN NONPROFIT AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

A mail questionnaire survey was conducted to gather information about entry level career opportunities available for college graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations in the United States. The findings of this study show that there are employment opportunities for graduates in the organizations. The employment opportunities include specific positions ranging from the program directors and supervisors to social workers, and from teachers to counselors. The positions existing in these organizations permit an entry of graduates from a variety of academic disciplines. The study suggests that for continued growth and development of the nonprofit sector and its contribution to the nation's employment, it needs trained manpower with college degrees. For this purpose, colleges and the nonprofit sector could develop cooperative programs, internships, and volunteer opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers with these organizations upon completion of their degree. Courses in administration and management of the nonprofit sector, fundraising, communications, public relations, and partnership development could be jointly prepared and offered by universities and the nonprofit sector to develop the pre-service training skills and knowledge desirable for college graduates and encourage them to pursue a career in these organizations. Finally, the author recommends that a national agenda be set to develop talents, skills, knowledge, and personalities among graduates for improved management of resources in nonprofit and voluntary organizations which allow everyone to be part of public and individual fulfillment.

ENTRY LEVEL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLEGE GRADUATES IN NONPROFIT AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

Finding employment is a shared concern of many Americans and the government. Indeed, forces of change in such areas as economics and politics, demographic shifts, alterations in the urban landscape, technological advances, and new development in social and cultural conditions are posing both constraints and possibilities for exploring employment opportunities. The relative size and composition of the work force in the United States will require such new avenues for gainful employment in every community throughout the nation. In recent years, many Americans have become aware of the importance of nonprofit and voluntary organizations and their roles in the service oriented economy (Rutter, 1984). The impact of such organizations on providing employment for individuals is more evident now than ever. There are numerous nonprofit and voluntary organizations involved in providing regular services to meet a definite social need manifested by communities (Ellis & Noyes, 1978). To better perform these services, the organizations engage both paid

and unpaid workers such as professionals, social workers, volunteers, technicians, specialists, and other citizens. Thus, the nonprofit and voluntary organizations have a great deal of potential to offer "working and earning for a living" opportunities for the people who want to pursue them.

Problems of the Study

Numerous nonprofit and voluntary organizations in the United States support and/or sponsor programs, projects, and services for people at local, regional, national, and international levels. The labor intensive activities by these organizations permit entry of workers with the most varied and wide range of formal and informal educational attainments. Thus, the prospective employee is presented with a rich metric of employment possibilities, each requiring a different degree of commitment and involvement in the work process (McAdam, 1986). The employment opportunities include specialized activities ranging from the production of goods and services to environmental protection, and from teaching and training to health services. Yet, this vast array of opportunities in nonprofit and voluntary organizations has been partially overlooked by most potential employment seekers--especially the college graduates.

Modern nonprofit and voluntary organizations need trained graduates to manage and effectively fulfill the organizational purposes (Mason, 1984). However, many organizations do not have systematic and adequately planned training programs and facilities (Navaratnam, 1986). On the other hand, many educational and training institutions lack the necessary curriculum and courses that provide early exposure and training for graduates in the aspects relevant to nonprofit and voluntary sector management and administration. Educators and administrators of the learning and training institutions are challenging the nonprofit sector to demonstrate that there are

entry level career opportunities and upward mobilities for college graduates. The limited participation and support of many universities and training institutions in producing college graduates for the nonprofit sector has, in many cases, led the nonprofit sector to recruiting few competent college graduates. Despite the potential career opportunities for college graduates in the nonprofit sector, it is obvious that there is a lack of information about the type of careers, salaries, benefits, promotions, and educational degrees desired for such careers available for potential employees.

At a time when our nation and the world is going through vast changes, creating a greater awareness of potential career opportunities for entry level college graduates in the nonprofit and voluntary organizations is of vital importance to public services and their contribution to the nation's economy. The organizations must attract more able graduates and lead them to successfully build up their careers with them over the years. Thus, this study was conducted to gather information about entry level career opportunities available for college graduates in the nonprofit sector.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study was to gather information about entry level career opportunities available for college graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations operating throughout the United States. The following specific objectives were accomplished:

1. to identify the purpose and programs of nonprofit and voluntary organizations in operation in the nation;
2. to categorize existing entry level positions and college degrees desired to obtain gainful employment in nonprofit and voluntary organizations;

3. to assess the responses given by administrators on items related to career opportunities in nonprofit and voluntary organizations; and
4. To recommend ways of improving the career preparedness and employability of college graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

Methodology

A descriptive research methodology was used in this study. The data was collected through a mail questionnaire survey. A one page questionnaire was constructed to collect information such as the purpose of the organization, services or programs offered, existing career opportunities, college degrees desired to seek employment, and administrators' opinions on the items related to career opportunities in nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

A nationwide purposive sample of both nonprofit and voluntary organizations was identified from Encyclopedia of Associations (Gruber, 1986). A nonprofit organization was identified as a service that is not for personal financial enrichment of any of its members, or managers; and no portion of the money or property of the organization is permitted to insure the benefit of any private individual, except as a proper grant according to its state-approved purpose, or as salaries paid for employee-type services rendered to the organization (Oleck, 1986). A voluntary organization is a service that consists of a structured group whose members have united to advance an interest or to achieve a social cause of community and/or nation. Such voluntary organizations may be administered and staffed by paid personnel (Cohen, 1984 & Van Til, 1977). Because the organizations vary greatly from one another, the sample was not representative of all the nonprofit and voluntary organizations in the United States. Identifying information such as name, address, telephone number, and name of contact person of the organizations was gathered and compiled from the Encyclopedia of Associations. The organizations were initially contacted by telephone to

ensure completeness of the identifying information. However, some organizations were not contacted due to incorrect telephone numbers.

A review of the questionnaire by placement officers and administrators of the Center for Volunteer Development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, suggested that respondents of the survey should be able to understand and complete the questionnaire to obtain the data required for this study. Thus, content validity and reliability of the questionnaire were assumed (Borg & Gall, 1983). Following the review, revision, and pretesting, the questionnaires were sent to the participating organizations. A cover letter was included to explain the purpose of the survey and its significance for increasing the awareness among college graduates about existing and potential employment opportunities in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The participating organizations in this survey were instructed to send, if available, employment lists and brochures describing their organizational purpose and programs along with the completed questionnaire. Of 100 questionnaires mailed, five (5%) were returned as undeliverable. A combination of two follow-up contacts, including a second mailing of the questionnaire and telephone contact, led to the return of 71 questionnaires. However, information provided by 14 of the organizations was incomplete. Thus, only 57% of the original sample of organizations provided the data requested for this study.

Findings

Of the organizations which provided the data requested for this study, 29 characterized themselves as nonprofit, 4 voluntary, and 24 both nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The organizations operate at national (23%), regional (7%), local (5%), international (16%), and at the combination of national, regional, local, and international levels (49%). The great majority (63%) of organizations deliver their

programs and services to the general population; but, others offer services and programs specifically for men (2%), women (5%), youth (9%), boys (9%), girls (2%), and helpless (10%). Although the organizations pursue different and specific purposes, they conduct both specific and duplicate programs for their target audiences. Not surprisingly, education, training, and research (59.6%), aiding helpless (43.9%), community development (29.5%), youth development (21.1%), and social change (21.1%) were reported as major purposes by many organizations. Table 1 shows various purposes reported by the organizations included in this study.

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place Table 1 about here

Categories in Table 2 show that the major programs range from health to counseling, and from vocational training to recycling of wastes. According to Table 2, programs and services are duplicated by many organizations. Program related education (71.9%), counseling and support (49.1%), partnership development (36.8%), vocational training (33.3%), economic and agricultural development (33.3%), and religious activities (29.8%) are considerably duplicated to meet the demand for such programs from various communities and societies.

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place Table 2 about here

Approximately 98% of the organizations considered in the analysis reported entry-level multiple career opportunities for college graduates. Table 3 shows the existing entry level positions in nonprofit and voluntary organizations for college graduates. As can be noted in the Table 3, the most frequently indicated positions in nonprofit and voluntary organizations consist of program directors (52.6%), social

workers (52.6%), counselors/advisors (50.9%), volunteers (49.1%), and supervisors (31.6%).

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place Table 3 about here

Table 4 shows the diversity in college degrees desired to obtain gainful employment in the nonprofit and voluntary organizations. As shown in Table 4, many organizations consider any college degree (84.2%) to offer employment for college graduates. However, some organizations reported that they require specific fields of study such as social sciences (56.1%), liberal arts (36.8%), education (24.6%), public administration (24.6%), registered nurse (22.8%), and business and management (22.8%).

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place Table 4 about here

Additional or special skills and knowledge are required to find employment with some organizations. The special skills and knowledge include care for people, religious affiliation, knowledge of a foreign language, U.S. citizenship, and a sense of humor. However, these requirements vary from one organization to another. Analysis of information provided by the organizations reveals that a variety of benefits and rewards such as salary, stipend, travel, insurance, and room and board are offered to the persons working for these organizations. In many cases, the salary and other benefits are very comparable to the salaries and benefits of private and government agencies.

Administrators of the organizations considered in this study have rated their opinions on a 4-point scale regarding items such as current career opportunities, fu-

ture career opportunities, internship/cooperative programs, volunteer opportunities, and job training for new graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Table 5 shows the percentage of response on each categories.

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place Table 5 about here

Table 5 reveals that the responses of the administrators regarding the career opportunities are relatively good. However, job training opportunities seem to be very poor.

Conclusions and Discussion

The findings from the study described above are highly useful and suggestive with reference to entry level career opportunities available for college graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. The findings provide insight into the diversity of nonprofit and voluntary organizations and their purpose, programs, target audiences, existing positions, and desired educational degrees for offering employments. The diversity permits entry level graduates to pursue a career with the most varied and wide ranging levels of formal educational attainment. There are many nonprofit and voluntary organizations in operation in every community throughout the nation. Thus, the prospective graduate is presented with diversified and decentralized employment possibilities, each requiring different levels of skills, interests, commitment, and involvement in the career development process.

Both large and small nonprofit and voluntary organizations are involved in serving a variety of causes. Over the years, many of these organizations have become an important and constructive economic force among various communities. For instance, the nonprofit sector provided 9.2% of all total employment in 1984

(Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1984). For continued growth and development of the nonprofit organizations and their contribution to the nation's economy, they need trained manpower with college degrees. To increase the employability of college graduate in these organizations, multifaceted efforts must be taken by administrators of the nonprofit sector to convince graduates of the opportunities to pursue and build a career with nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Distribution of brochures describing purpose, programs, employment opportunities, and benefits and rewards must be made available to college graduates through counseling and placement services in the nation's universities and other training institutions. Potential and larger nonprofit and voluntary organizations could volunteer to participate in "career days" in colleges to demonstrate the existing employment opportunities in the nonprofit sector.

As this study revealed, many nonprofit and voluntary organizations lack job training programs and training facilities for graduates. In cooperation with and in support of colleges and universities, the nonprofit sector could develop cooperative programs, internships, and volunteer opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers with the nonprofit sector upon completion of their degree. Courses in administration and management of the nonprofit sector, fundraising, communications, public relations, and partnership development could be jointly prepared and offered by universities and the nonprofit sector to develop the pre-service training skills and knowledge necessary for college graduates to pursue a prospective career in the nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

In sorting through the employment lists and brochures that came from the organizations surveyed, it became quite clear that there are many part-time employment opportunities available in many organizations located in every community. Such part-time opportunities are ideal for people who want a part-time or second job

during their career. Practically all the organizations, except some religious ones, are Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employers. Thus, employment opportunities are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, or political affiliation. Many organizations conduct regular recruitment programs for prospective employees. Nonprofit organizations such as United Way and the Easter Seal Society conduct specialized training and recruitment programs for selecting their potential employees. Further, personal letters received from a few administrators who responded to the survey suggested that they are supportive to the purpose of this study and pledged their support and cooperation to develop and increase the rate of employment of trained college graduates in nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

Most of the discussion above has dealt with the purpose, programs, projects, services, and employment possibilities in nonprofit and voluntary organizations. Although this study could lead to the wonderful world of exploring career opportunities in nonprofit and voluntary organizations, lack of resources limited the researcher to investigate and compare employment opportunities, salaries and benefits, upward mobility, satisfaction, intrinsic rewards, and challenges between nonprofit sector and profit making private enterprises and government agencies. In many nonprofit organizations, the upward mobility in the career development ladder is fairly limited. However, the problems of upward mobility could be overcome through calls for mutual mobility among nonprofit and voluntary organizations.

There are many more nonprofit and volunteer organizations that were not within the scope of this study that do carry out several programs, projects, and services not only taking charge of the service sector of our capitalist economy, but offering greater possibilities for the employment of millions of people. Furthermore, the nation's government is stimulating the growth and contribution of nonprofit and

voluntary organizations to take many tasks in education, employment, health, and other vital social and human services to the people. Thus, this study suggests that a nationwide large scale investigation must be made to identify occupations, competencies, and training needed for various occupations, and salaries and benefits offered for employees. It is also important that a national agenda be set to develop talents, skills, knowledge, and personalities among college graduates; further, those skills must be used for improved management of resources in nonprofit and voluntary organizations which allow every society to be part of public and individual fulfillment.

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Table 1. Major Purposes Reported by Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (N=57)

Purpose	Percent
Youth Development	21.1
Social Change	21.1
Aiding Helpless	43.9
Assistance on Disasters	10.5
Social Service	57.9
Economic Development	17.5
Community Development	29.5
Education, Training, & Research	59.6
Cultural Preservation & Development	15.8
Prevention of Diseases	12.3
Other Purposes	5.3

Note:
Other purposes include conservation of resources and referral services.

Table 2. Major Programs Offered by Nonprofit and Voluntary organizations (N=57)

Program Areas	Percent
Health Program	45.6
Educational Programs	71.9
Vocational Training	33.3
Religious Program	29.8
Economic & Agric. Development	33.3
Counseling & Support Services	49.1
Control Crime, Alcohol & drug Abuses	5.3
Partnership development	36.8
Foster Homes	7.0
Research Activities	19.3
Awards & Scholarship	21.1
Construction & Maintenance	15.8
Recycling of Wastes	3.5
Other Programs	10.5

Note:
Other programs include publication, information supply, and Poverty Control.

Table 3. Categories of Existing Entry Level Positions in Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (N=57)

Type of Careers	Percent
Program Directors	52.6
Supervisors	31.6
Teachers	19.3
Counselors/Advisors	50.9
Social Workers	52.6
Physicians	8.8
Healthcare Nurses	19.3
Nutritionists	5.3
Volunteers	49.1
Ministers/Pastors	7.0
Managers	21.1
Fund Raisers	7.0
Other Opportunities	29.8

Note:
Other career opportunities include Technicians, Specialists, Accountants, Researchers, Secretaries, and Staff positions.

Table 4. College Degrees Desired for Entry Level Positions by Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (N=57)

Type of Degrees	Percent
General Areas	84.2
Education	24.6
Public Administration	24.6
Social Sciences	56.1
Registered Nurse	22.8
Medicine	14.0
Business& Management	22.8
Liberal Arts	36.8
Economics	17.5
Animal Science	8.8
Others (Journalism)	14.0

Table 5. Percentage of Responses on Items Related to Career Opportunities in Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (N=57)

Comments	Current Opportunities	Future Opportunities	Intern/Coop Opportunities	Volunteer Opportunities	Job Training Opportunities
No comment	24.6	29.7	35.1	36.8	36.8
Poor	21.1	5.3	17.5	10.5	28.1
Good	36.8	40.4	24.6	24.6	12.3
Excellent	17.5	24.6	22.8	28.1	22.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0